

8011

MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR

TIOGA CREEK

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

(ACEC)

U. S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management

UMPQUA FIELD OFFICE
COOS BAY DISTRICT - OREGON

Approved by:

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Date

INTRODUCTION

This document provides management guidance for the Tioga Creek Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in the Umpqua Field Office. All prescribed management actions are in compliance with the *Final Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan* (USDI, 1994a) and its *Record of Decision* (USDI, 1995), and the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, and its' *Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (USDA; USDI, 1994b), and the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for the Amendment to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (USDA; USDI, 2001). This plan conforms with: the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) objectives described in the Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs, pp. B-9 through B-34) of the Northwest Forest Plan; the *Port-Orford-cedar Management Guidelines* (USDI, Oct. 1994c; and the *Noxious Weed Strategy for Oregon & Washington* (USDI, 1994d) and *Partners Against Weeds*, An Action Plan for the Bureau of Land Management (USDI, 1996).

The Tioga Creek is located in Late Successional Reserve (LSR) land use allocation and has some portion of its' acreage included in Riparian Reserves (RR). Also, it is reinstated Oregon & California (O&C) railroad land and in a Tier 1 Key Watershed. Descriptions of these designations are listed below.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) - (designated in 1983 by citing Federal Land Policy & Management Act, 1976): "Areas within public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used, or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes . . ." (43 CFR 1601.0-5). To be designated an ACEC the value, resource, system, or process identified must be of "substantial significance ... this generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern" (43 CFR 1610.7-2).

Research Natural Area (RNA): The RNA designation itself is not tied to a particular law and each agency uses different laws and regulations to govern its use. BLM regulations state that for an area to be designated a RNA it must have one or more of the following characteristics:

- A typical representation of a common plant or animal association.
- An unusual plant or animal association.
- A threatened or endangered plant or animal species.
- A typical representation of common geologic, soil, or water features.
- Outstanding or unusual geologic, soil, or water features.

RNA designation is designed to prevent unnatural encroachments and activities which would directly or indirectly modify ecological processes (i.e. to preserve an area in an undisturbed state) with research

and education as the exclusive focus. Activities such as logging (including salvage) and grazing are strictly prohibited, unless it is a treatment of the natural features of interest. Physical improvements such as roads, trails, fences, and building are generally not allowed except those considered essential to proper research or educational use. Public use is generally discouraged. Maintaining trails in existence at the time of the RNA designation, depends on administrative units and determination of effects.

Reasons for RNA designation are:

- Provide baseline to compare results of human activities in similar environment.
- Provide opportunities to study natural processes in undisturbed ecosystems, including plant and animal species (particularly rare and endangered species).
- Provide a gene pool preserve for plant and animal species (particularly rare and endangered species).

Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) - (designated in 1994 by the Northwest Forest Plan): LSR's "are to be managed to protect and enhance conditions of late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems, which serve as habitat for late-successional and old-growth related species including the northern spotted owl. These reserves are designed to maintain a functional, interacting, late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystem" (ROD Standards and Guidelines, C-1 #1)

Riparian Reserves (RR)- (designated in 1994 by the Northwest Forest Plan): Riparian Reserves were developed to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems contained within them (Standards and Guides, C-30). A component of the riparian reserves is the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (Standards and Guides, B-9). As a general rule, standards and guides for Riparian Reserves prohibit or regulate activities in Riparian Reserves that retard or prevent attainment of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.

Oregon and California Lands (O&C): The 1866 congressional act granting Public lands to the Oregon and California Railroad Company was revoked in 1916. These revested lands were placed under the General Land Office (GLO) with guidelines to dispose of them. The revenues from the sale of the timber and lands were to be divided among the federal government, Oregon, and the counties in which the lands were located. The results were disappointing so the Oregon and California Revested Lands Sustained Yield Management Act of August 28, 1937 was passed. This act called for implementation of a sustained yield cutting program. Lands could be used for grazing and recreation, but watersheds, wildlife, and other resources were to be protected. Receipts from sale of timber were still to be shared with the counties having O&C lands.

Key Watershed: Serve as refugia critical for maintaining and recovering habitat for at-risk stocks of anadromous salmonids and resident fish species. These refugia include areas of high quality habitat and areas of degraded habitat. Those with high quality conditions will serve as anchors for the potential recovery of depressed stocks. Those of lower quality habitat have high potential for restoration and will become future sources of high quality habitat with the implementation of a comprehensive restoration program.

Tier 1 Watershed: Tier 1 watersheds contribute directly to conservation of at-risk anadromous salmonids, and resident fish species. They also have a high potential of being restored as part of a watershed restoration program.

ACEC - QUICK REFERENCE TABLE

TIOGA CREEK - 40 ACRES - T27S, R09W, Sec. 17	
Land Classifications & Uses	ACEC, LSR, RR, O&C, and Tier 1 - Key Watershed
OHV status	Closed- "continue to manage as closed"
Leasable Mineral Entry Status	Open - (no surface occupancy)
Locatable-Salable Mineral Entry Status	Closed
Oregon Natural Heritage Ecosystem Cells (ONHP 1998)	NA
Designated Values	<p>ACEC/LSR/RR/Tier 1-Key Watershed - Preserve, protect, or restore native species composition and ecological processes of biological communities.</p> <p>Special Status Species - Critical Habitat for Northern Spotted Owls & Marbled Murrelets, & for T&E and special status plants.</p> <p>Natural System /Fish/Wildlife/Botanical - Mature conifer-dominated riparian zone, containing significant populations of spawning coho salmon and steelhead, and winter steelhead, cutthroat trout, pacific lamprey, blacknose dace, and cottids. Used extensively by elk during summer heat and winter cold.</p>

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TIOGA CREEK AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Access: Two primary access routes exist, see attached map(s):

- Bottom access (i.e. on the north); Take highway 101 from Coos Bay, then take highway 42 into Coquille (12 miles). Take the Coquille Fairview highway to Fairview (9 miles). At Fairview take a right onto the Coos Bay Wagon Road and follow it (4 miles) to the Middle Creek Access Road # 27-11-29.0 and turn left. Follow it (14 miles) to the four way junction (Middle Creek, Burnt Mountain Tie, Bear Track and Tioga Tie. Continue straight onto Tioga Tie road #26-10-36.0 (this takes you over a hump in the road and then goes downhill), 2.2 miles brings you to the junction of the old Tioga Creek road # 26-10-36.1. Turn right onto this road, there is a low water crossing about 2.5 miles up this road. From this point the road may not be driveable and access would be by foot following the old Tioga Creek road that parallels the bottom of Tioga Creek. Where the creek splits in section eight access is by foot up the right fork to the BLM property line (about .5 mile).
- Top access (i.e. on the northeast); Take highway 101 from Coos Bay, then take highway 42 into Coquille (12 miles). Take the Coquille Fairview highway to Fairview (9 miles). At Fairview take a right onto the Coos Bay Wagon Road and follow it (4 miles) to the Middle Creek Access Road # 27-11-29.0 and turn left. Follow it (14 miles) to the four way junction (Middle Creek, Burnt Mountain Tie, Bear Track and Tioga Tie. Continue straight onto Tioga Tie road #26-10-36.0 (**note you will pass the 26-10-36.1 road mentioned above*) about 4.5 miles to the junction of the Burnt Ridge Road, turn right onto this road and continue about 5.5 miles. Turn right at the junction of Nickols Drive road # 27-9-15.0, drive to the end of this road/road # 27-9-15.5 (which ever is more open/gets you closer), hike downhill to the SW about .5 mile to the ACEC boundary.

Acres: Approximately 40 acres.

Elevation: Approximately 1,000 feet to 1,200 feet, see attached map.

Land Use Allocation: Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), Late Successional Reserve (LSR), and Riparian Reserves (RR). O&C lands in a Tier 1 Key Watershed.

Legal description: Sec. 17, NW 1/4, T. 27S., R.9W., Willamette Meridian.

Background: In 1969, wildlife biologist Dick King documented the uniqueness of this area. Additionally, in 1970 stream surveys of the Tioga Subwatershed were conducted and it was apparent that this 3/4 mile long reach of a fifth order stream possessed characteristics not seen in other District streams. Prior to the 1960's, this reach of Tioga Creek was a resident trout only stream and not accessible to anadromous fish. Throughout the 1960's, various structures including a fish ladder were constructed to allow for anadromous passage. Also, there was blasting of bedrock falls. Several years later input by staff specialists for a road extension by Menasha Corp., prevented serious damage to the riparian zone. Later, a debris avalanche from privately logged lands blocked the upper end of this section, minimizing disturbance to the current ACEC reach. Ironically, this debris was cleaned by BLM, in 1979, to provide for fish passage. A line-pulling carriage side blocked the jam material out of the channel without removing a single tree. Other hand clearances of smaller debris from this old slide occurred in 1981 and 1982. The stream has since returned to as near a natural condition as it was in 1970.

This area was given ACEC designation under the Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995). The suggested protection is 200' slope distance on each side of the riparian area.

History of Use: This area is used for hunting and fishing recreational activities.

Primary Values: The ACEC is in a Tier 1 Key Watershed which contributes directly to conservation of at-risk anadromous salmonids, and resident fish species.

This perennial stream reach is currently inhabited by coho salmon, winter steelhead, cutthroat trout, pacific lamprey, blacknose dace, and cottids. The stream substrate consists of large and small bedload material making excellent spawning and rearing for anadromous and resident fish. The reason for this bedload storage is the large amount of coarse woody structure imbedded in and along the channel. The surrounding vegetation is multi-story with old-growth conifer, old hardwoods, and young alder. The dominant overstory is very large conifers. The sub-dominant overstory is big-leaf maple and the understory is mainly young alders resulting from channel shifting. This reach appears to be a very mature riparian ecosystem that may have dominated our coastal streams, and should be preserved so we can compare to riparian and aquatic enhancement efforts. Many of the boles forming structure in the channel exceed four feet in diameter. These structures create cover and excellent large rearing pool habitat. The debris removal mentioned under background is the only known human-caused impact to the stream habitat in this specific reach. The channel is relatively wide with flat terraces adjacent to the stream. It has a moderate gradient with several steps caused by large boulders. Natural side-channel development is resulting from large tree boles building bedload and diverting winter flow across the terraces.

Management Objectives: (RMP pg 38)

- Retain existing RNAs and ACECs that meet the test for continued designation. Provide new special areas where needed to maintain or protect important values.
- Maintain, protect, and/or restore relevant and important values.
- Manage uses to prevent damage to the values that make the area outstanding.

Management and Use Constraints:

- A. Aquatics: (including candidate and T&E species) - This 4th order perennial stream reach is about 3/4 miles long and is inhabited by coho salmon, winter steelhead, cutthroat trout, pacific lamprey, blacknose dace, and cottids. Fish enhancement projects may be conducted within this area.

In addition to fish, the area's high quality aquatic and riparian environment may provide habitat for as many as 16 riparian-associated amphibians (Johnson and O'Neil 2001 and BLM 1995). Other riparian species that may occur, if required habitat elements are present, include 132 species of birds, 54 species of mammals, and 13 species of reptiles (see Section T, Wildlife Habitat). The condition of this riparian ACEC for both fish and wildlife provide an excellent baseline for the study of riparian-associated species.

- B. Botany: (including S&M and T&E species) - No botanical surveys have been conducted for this area. Due to existing potential habitat for Survey and manage species and special status species, pre-disturbance surveys would be required (FSEIS, 2000) prior to any habitat disturbing activities.
- C. Cooperative Management opportunities: Adjacent land owners will be provided a copy of the management plan and encouraged to provide additional protection.
- D. Cultural Resources: There are no documented cultural resource values in this ACEC. Any proposed ground disturbing activity within this area would go through standard NEPA processes, including cultural resource review and consultation with the appropriate Federally - recognized Native American tribes.
- E. Fire Management:
1. Fire Suppression: Is to be done according to the current Districts Fire Management Plan.

2. Fire Use: Is to be done according to the current Districts Fire Management Plan.
 3. Fuels Treatment: Is to be done according to the current Districts Fire Management Plan.
- F. Insects and Disease: No additional control, beyond normal BLM practices, for insects or diseases will be carried out unless any infestation or infection threatens to drastically alter the natural ecological processes within the area.
 - G. Land Exchange/Sale/Acquisition: Standard NEPA processes include BLM specialists review, and requires compliance with all appropriate plans including land classification restrictions.
 - H. Land Right-of-Ways/Access: If no other reasonable alternative exists, BLM can not legally prohibit the public from accessing or managing their lands.
 - I. Minerals: The area is open for mineral leasing with no surface occupancy and closed to locatable/salable mineral.
 - J. Non-Native Plants and Animals: (including noxious weeds) - Introduction of non-native plants and animals is prohibited. Prioritize these areas to eliminate noxious weeds and non-native plants and animals.
 - K. Other land Uses: Land uses not identified in this plan will be permitted only if they are compatible with the management objectives of the ACEC and Coos Bay District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995). All land use proposals will be reviewed by BLM personnel with the appropriate expertise.
 - L. Publicity: The location and resources of the ACEC will be publicized in public, official and scientific circles.
 - M. Recreation: (including visitor use and interpretation) - Recreational activities will go through standard NEPA process and be in conformance with the RMP and this management plan.
 - N. Research and Education: Observational activities are favored by BLM. Techniques will normally be of a nondestructive, non-consumptive nature. An exception to this will be the collection of voucher specimens, unless such collection might significantly reduce species population levels. Collecting will be carried out in accordance with Federal (50 CFR 17) and State (ORS 564) regulations concerning the collection of survey and manage, rare, threatened, or endangered species, and the specimens will be deposited in a public educational or scientific institution. No person shall use, occupy, construct, or maintain facilities in a manner inconsistent

with the purpose of the area. Felling of trees, extensive soil excavation, and modification of any part of the forest and/or its related ecosystems for manipulative research studies is not permitted.

- O. Silviculture: Silviculture practices will be considered as a tool to maintain, protect, or restore relevant and important ecological system processes of the biological communities, or in cases of catastrophic damage when the damage threatens adjacent forests or public safety (see fire, and insects and disease). All actions will comply with management directions described in the Coos Bay Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995).
- P. Special Forest Products: There is no known past or current use of this area. Standards and Guidelines for LSR's and Riparian Reserves apply. No additional restrictions are needed to protect the ACEC.
- Q. Timber Management: This area is not available for planned silviculture and timber harvest activities, or road construction. Windthrow and other damaged timber will be allowed to decay as a natural part of the ecosystem process. Exceptions may be made to maintain, protect, or restore relevant and important ecological system processes of the biological communities, or in cases of catastrophic damage when the damage threatens adjacent forests or public safety (see fire, and insects and disease). Exceptions will comply with management actions/directions as described in the Coos Bay Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995).
- R. Vehicle Use: This area is closed to motorized and non-motorized vehicle use except that required for emergencies or specifically authorized by BLM. Subject to valid existing rights and buried lines in rights-of-way of existing roads. Exclude rights-of-way in this area (see fire and timber management). Allocation of lands to existing rights-of-way would continue. Future rights-of-way may be granted in this area when no feasible alternative route or designated right-of-way corridor is available.
- S. Visual Resource Management: The ACEC and surrounding lands are classified as VRM 4, which allows moderate levels of change to the characteristic landscape. Management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. Every attempt should be made to minimize the effect of management activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture. However, other land status and classifications, such as ACEC and LSR, severely restrict the type of management activities that may occur. Under these situations, whichever rules are the most restrictive take precedence.
- T. Wildlife Habitat: (including S&M and T&E species) -

Habitat enhancement projects: Enhancement projects may be conducted provided they

maintain, protect, restore relevant and important values, or preserve, protect , or restore native species composition and ecological processes of biological communities (including Oregon Natural Heritage Plan terrestrial and aquatic cells) and they comply with the appropriate regulations and plans as described below. With the exception of federally protected species, when the effects of proposed activities may conflict among species with varying habitat requirements, the needs of riparian associated species have priority.

Special Status Species (SSS) Occurrence: The Coos Bay District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995) provides a list of SSS (Table C-3) that may occur on District. Some may inhabit the area, particularly those associated with riparian habitats, including seven amphibian species. One amphibian SSS, the red-legged frog, has been documented in this area. The area is classified as unsurveyed suitable habitat for marbled murrelets, contains a site center for northern spotted owls, and is designated as critical habitat for both murrelets and spotted owls. Proposed activities will require review and compliance/consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Northwest Forest Plan Survey and Manage Species (red tree voles): No red tree vole surveys have been conducted in this area. Proposed activities would comply with the ROD for Amendment to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and Other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (USDA; USDI 2001).

Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan buffer species: The Coos Bay District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995) requires protective buffers around the nests of selected species, including great blue herons and certain raptors. No nests of listed species have been documented to date within this ACEC.

Game Species: Hunting and trapping within the ACEC is acceptable and is regulated by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Common game species include Roosevelt elk, black bear, black-tailed deer, and ruffed grouse.

Implementation Monitoring: (Appendix L - ROD)

Monitoring Questions:

1. Are BLM actions and BLM-authorized actions/uses near or within the special area consistent with resource management plan objectives and management direction?
2. What is the status of the preparation, revision and implementation of this area of critical environmental concern management plan?

3. Are existing BLM actions and BLM-authorized actions and uses not consistent with management direction for the area being eliminated or relocated?
4. Are actions being identified which are needed to maintain or restore the important values of the area? Are the actions being implemented?
5. Are protection buffers being provided for specific rare and locally endemic species and other species in the upland forest matrix?

Monitoring Requirements:

1. Annually, at least 20% of the files on all actions and research proposals within and adjacent to the special area will be reviewed to determine whether the possibility of impacts on area of critical environmental concern values was considered, and whether any mitigation identified as important for maintenance of area of critical environmental concern values was required. If mitigation was required, the relevant actions will be reviewed on the ground, after completion, to ascertain whether they were actually implemented.
2. The annual Program Summary will address implementation questions 2 through 5.

Effectiveness and Validation Monitoring: (Appendix L - ROD)

Monitoring Questions:

1. Are the implemented management actions designed to protect the values of the special area effective?
2. Are the special area managed to restore or prevent the loss of outstanding values and minimize disturbance?

Monitoring Requirements:

1. The special area will be monitored at least every three years to determine if the values for which it was designated are being maintained.
2. When proactive management actions are implemented they will be monitored annually for the first three years and after that every three years, or until objectives are met, to determine if these actions met their objectives.

REFERENCES

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